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ABSTRACT

Not only has the overall participation of women in the labor force increased dramatically since World War II, but the internal character of the female labor force is changing. The greatest increases have been among married women and young mothers, groups which thirty-five years ago represented the lowest participation groups. Women workers have a low average income and cluster in a fairly limited number of traditionally women's fields. During the 1960s these shifts occurred: women entered male fields and they made significant gains in some predominantly male professions. Problematic is the emphasis in the research literature on well-educated, professional women--and not on women working in blue-collar and service occupations. A three-year study conducted extensive case studies of 120 women in working-class, largely nontraditional, jobs in three major California cities. Results indicated that paid employment was significant to interviewed women because of economic benefits, escape, outside communication and friendship, challenge and personal satisfaction, and need for achievement and recognition. Women in the sample who were married and/or raising children appeared to be living with contradictory attitudes and practices when it came to combining employment and family roles. Many took responsibility for a wide range of household activities in addition to full-time employment. (YLB)

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Occupational Values and Family Roles: A Descriptive Study of Women Working in Blue-Collar and Service Occupations

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Introduction

The changing position of women in the workplace and the family has been the focus of a great deal of public discourse, considerable legislative activity and a growing amount of social science research. The initial focus of attention in this area has tended to be on the work and family experiences and problems of women working in white-collar and professional positions and of homemakers dealing with returning to work or school. (Friedan, 1963; Rossi, 1965; Bernard, 1965; Ginzberg, 1966; Epstein, 1970; Theodore, 1971) While these are pressing and legitimate areas of concern, as important are the changing circumstances of women in working-class positions and the consequences of these changes for the individual, the family, and society. There are a few sensitive and insightful studies on working-class women, particularly in the context of the blue-collar family. (Komarovsky@ 1967; Rubin@ 1977) However, careful studies of the occupational values and on-the-job experiences of women in blue-collar and service occupations and of the ways in which such women integrate employment and family roles are much more difficult to find.

There is clearly a need for more data on working-class women for a variety of reasons. First, generalizations about the social, economic, and psychological implications of the changing nature of women's roles in American society can only be tentative until a more cross-sectional portrait of the female experience is available. Given the critical importance of structural characteristics such as class, race, ethnicity and place of residence to our understanding of social experience in general, the female experience specifically needs to be studied in its broadest social outlines. Secondly, changes in educational, economic and employment policies run the risk of being unresponsive or ill-suited to significant sectors of the American population if the nature of their experience of social change is not fully understood. Finally, the development of a reliable body of empirical data and a systematic approach to theory in the Sociology of Work and the Sociology of the Family depends on a firm base of descriptive data on diverse populations.

Given these concerns, I will provide an overview of what is currently known about working-class women and working-class work based on census data and the body of basic research currently available to us. I will then move into a discussion of findings emerging from an ongoing study of women in blue-collar and service occupations in three urban centers in the West. The data under discussion relate to the significance of paid employment in the lives of these working women and to the ways in which women working in blue-collar and service occupations integrate employment and family roles. The larger study of which these findings are a part deals generally with the employment experiences of women in blue-collar and service occupations and specifically with the experiences of women entering nontraditional blue-collar occupations such as welding or auto mechanics.

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Current Perspectives on Women in Blue Collar and Service Occupations

In addition to the fact that the overall participation of women in the labor force has increased dramatically since World War II, the internal character of the female labor force is changing. Forty-six percent of all women 16 years of age and over are currently in the labor force accounting for 39% of the civilian labor force of this country. This compares with 1940 when approximately 29% of all women 16 years of age and over were in the labor force representing 25% of the total labor force. In 1940, however, women in the labor force tended to be characteristically young and single (18 to 24) with the rates for women 35 and over with school age children increasing as they returned to work. In the 1950s and 1960s the return to work of older women with school age children kept increasing, but the highest proportion still was younger women and the lowest, women in the childbearing ages and women over 60. By 1974 however, a new pattern was emerging. Fully 61% of women 20 to 24 were in the labor force and participation during the childbearing years remained high (52%) with increases to 55% among women 35 to 54 years of age. These figures indicate that today a majority of women in the early years of marriage and child rearing continue their full-time participation in the labor force. In fact, the greatest increases have been among married women and young mothers, groups which 35 years ago represented the lowest participation groups

The U. S. Department of Labor suggests a variety of reasons for these changes:

> The economic climate during most of this period was a major contributor to the sharp increase in the labor force participation of young mothers. The availability of jobs, particularly in the expanding service sector, undoubtedly attracted many married and other young women into the marketplace. It would also appear that generally good job opportunities for young married women, particularly in clerical, sales, and service fields, may have played a part in the decisions of many young couples to postpone the timing of their first child or to have fewer children. On the other hand, the movement into the labor force may have followed rather than contributed to declining fertility of these women. The birth rate per thousand population during the latter 1960s fell from 19.4 in 1965 to 17.5 in 1968. Although it showed some indication of picking up in 1969 (17.8) and 1970 (18.4), the rate fell again, and in 1973 it was 15.0. Advances in birth control techniques facilitated the decline in the birth rate and consequent increase in women's labor force participation. (U. S. Department of Labor, 1975, pp. 13-14)

Department of Labor statistics also indicate that women had an average income of less than $6,500 a year in 1973 with the percentage of women workers in the higher income categories being quite small; 41.8% of women workers earned $10,000 to $14,999 compared to 22.3% of men; 1.3% of women earned $15,000 or more compared to 16.9% of men. These income figures are important to note because, as we shall demonstrate later, systematic social science research has tended to focus on the more affluent, and thus the smallest minority of female workers.

Of equal interest for our purposes is the occupational distribution of women. Although women's increased labor force participation is due largely to the increased demand for women workers in female jobs (Oppenheimer, 1970), there also appear to be some shifts. The Department of Labor reports that as of 1974, 35% of all employed women were in clerical jobs, 21% were service workers, 15% professional and technical workers and 13% were operatives. Within these categories women tend to cluster in "female" fields such as cosmetology or nursing. In fact, women workers cluster in a fairly limited number of fields as reported by the Department of Labor.

> Although increasing numbers of women have become employed in traditionally male career fields in the last decade and a half, women are still concentrated in a relatively small number of occupations. For example, in 1973 more than two-fifths of all women workers were employed in ten occupations — secretary, retail trade salesworker, bookkeeper, private household worker, elementary school teacher, waitress, typist, cashier, sewer and stitcher, and registered nurse. Each of these occupations employed more than 800,000 women.
>
> There were 57 occupations in which at least 100,000 women were employed. About three-fourths of all women workers were employed in these 57 occupations. Thirty of these occupations were white-collar, 14 were service, and the remaining 13 were blue-collar or farm. The number of occupations in which 100,000 or more women were employed increased to 57 in 1973 from 36 in 1960 and 29 in 1950.
>
> An indication of the continued occupational concentration of women's employment can be seen by examining the percentage women make up of all employees in the 57 occupations. In 17 of the occupations, women accounted for 90% or more of all employees. In more than half of the occupations (31 of the 57), women made up 75% or more of all employees.
>
> Male employment showed much less occupational concentration. The ten largest occupations for men employed less than 20% of all male workers,

and 52% of the men were employed in the 57 largest occupations. (As indicated previously, the comparable proportions for women were about 40% and 75%.)

(U. S. Department of Labor, 1975, pp. 91-92)

Despite the continued concentration of women in a relatively small number of traditionally women's fields important shifts appear to have taken place during the 1960s with women workers entering male fields in large numbers.

Perhaps the most dramatic shift that occurred between 1960 and 1970 was the large influx of women into the skilled trades. In 1970 almost half a million women (495,000) were working in the skilled occupations (craft and kindred worker group), up from 277,000 in 1960. The rate of increase (nearly 80%) was twice that for women in all occupations. It was eight times the rate of increase for men in the skilled trades.

Employment increased in almost all the skilled trades — in construction, mechanic and repair, and supervisory blue-collar occupations. In fact the increase for women exceeded the rate of growth for men. For example, the employment of women carpenters increased by nearly 8,000 (from about 3,300 to about 11,000), compared with a growth of less than 6,000 among male carpenters. In employment of women were: electricians from 2,500 to 8,700 (0.7 to 1.8%); plumbers from about 1,000 to 4,000 (0.3 to 1.1%).

(U. S Department of Labor, 1975, pp. 92)

The Census reports that women have also made significant though overall, not as dramatic employment gains in some predominantly male *professions.*

. . . Employment of women lawyers grew from less than 5,000 to more than 12,000 between 1960 and 1970 and women nearly doubled their proportion of all employed lawyers (2.4 to 4.7%). Similar gains in employment were made in the medical professions. The number of women physicians increased from about 16,000 to nearly 28,000, and the proportion of doctors who were women rose from 7 to 9%. The number of women dentists increased from about 1,900 to more than 3,100 (from 2.3 to 3.4% of all dentists).

(U. S. Department of Labor, 1975, pp. 93)

An awareness of recent labor market trends and employment characteristics is important when examining the existing research and literature on women and work. Understandable, but nonetheless problematic, is the emphasis in the literature on women college students, women scientists, attorneys, academics, business executives and other high earners, and on dual-career families in which both partners are professionals or high earners. (Rossi, 1965, 1974; Ginzberg, 1966; Astin, 1969, 1972; Epstein, 1970; Theodore, 1971; Holmstrom, 1972) Although all are excellent studies, they tend nonetheless to focus on a narrow range of social background characteristics, career-choice processes, actual work experiences and family and lifestyle concerns. In additon, despite the new employment trends reported by the Department of Labor, the literature focuses on the problems of entering and succeeding in predominantly male fields such as law, business, medicine and college teaching, even though the gains in these fields have not been as significant as in many blue-collar and technical occupations.

This apparent research bias undoubtedly results to some extent from the ease with which academic social scientists can study and gain access to other professionals. However, it also reflects a more general inattention in the literature on work and career choice processes to the experiences of female skilled and semiskilled workers. In addition, while social scientists have given valuable attention to questions of worker organization, morale and alienation among male blue-collar workers, there appears to be little concern with studying the development of career and vocational commitment, the workplace experience, or the integration of work commitments with community and family roles among women workers. The sociology of work tends to be a sociology of the male workplace, the culture of the male work group or the lifestyle of the male worker. In fact, from the current literature one would assume that were no such thing as a significant and varied group of working women in the blue-collar world. (Herrick and Shepherd, 1971; Le Masters, 1975; Kornblum, 1976) Census data suggests quite the contrary.

The virtual absence in the literature on women working in blue-collar and service occupations results in the persistence of a number of common-sense assumptions about the occupational values, work experiences and importance of family roles to large numbers of women in the labor force. Most problematic is the minimal importance attributed to paid employment in the lives of anyone other than well-educated, professional women and, of course, men. (Blauner, 1964; Safilios-Rothschild, 1974) Paid employment is commonly represented as a choice which must be balanced against the more primary role of wife and mother or as a simple extension of the family role for the lower-income or poverty-level woman who, out of economic necessity, is forced to contribute to family maintenance. The kind of work and its personal rewards are seen as less important than money, if important at all. However there are increasing indications that for many women paid employment is not perceived as a simple extension of family roles or as a

problematic alternative to, or a source of conflict with, marriage and family roles. For many women it is a "taken for granted" aspect of adult experience. It is regarded as a typical and predictable fact of life *whether or not* one faces dire economic necessity, marries or has children. In fact there is much to suggest that paid employment is as significant to the personal satisfaction of the blue-collar women as the literature suggests it is for men, or for more affluent professional women, although perhaps for different reasons. Mirra Komarovsky's early observations about the restricted nature of the role of housewife in the working class are useful here.

> The greater sense of pressure experienced by the college-educated mother is not due to the time spent on housework and care of young children. The fact is that working-class life is more restricted. There is no chauffeuring of children to and from art or dancing classes, no rushing with the children's dinner before the baby-sitter takes over the parents' night out. There are no books to be finished or current magazines to be read. There is very little club work and little social life with other couples. Visiting with relatives is informal, and meals away from home are usually at the home of one of the couple's parents. Women friends and relatives occasionally drop in for coffee and then continue visiting as their hostesses iron or mend. In comparison with college-educated women, then, the lives of these homemakers are narrow in range of activities and interests. For educated women, a sense of pressure is generated by the sheer volume of the stimuli to which they respond and by their consequent awareness of the many uses to which they might put free time.
>
> (Komarovsky, 1967)

Komarovsky comments not only on the more elaborate nature of middle-class homemaking but goes on to describe the greater ambivalence towards paid employment felt by middle-class women in comparison to blue-collar women.

> In one earlier study, college-educated mothers appeared more defensive and guilt-ridden about their desire to work. This was substantiated in another investigation of middle-class working mothers who insisted to their children that they work only because they need the money, a statement they acknowledge to be untrue. "Otherwise what excuse could I give . . . for working?" The self-doubts raised by the spread of psychoanalytic theory ("What is wrong with me that motherhood and homemaking do not suffice?") do not plague our respondents. The desire to work "for a change of atmosphere" was expressed by them without any embarrassment or defensiveness. The working-class housewife is so tied down that to work in order to "get out of the house" is an acceptable motive even when it may occasionally disguise a wish for independence or adventure. But the prosperous housewife who wants to work can hardly claim that this is her only way to get "out of the house." She must acknowledge that she wants to "realize her potentialities" or be a "person in her own right." Such individualistic drives have however been made suspect by the doctrine that the truly feminine woman finds ample rewards in her familial roles and does not crave individual achievement.
>
> (Komarovsky, 1967)

It is likely that the pressures and satisfactions experienced by middle class women in homemaking roles are decreasing given that increasing numbers of middle-class women are currently in school or the work force. Nonetheless the relatively greater isolation and dissatisfaction experienced by working-class women in homemaking roles has been convincingly supported in recent works on the blue-collar family, and on northeastern, urban, working-class neighborhoods. (Rubin, 1977; Ferree, 1976) The full significance of this for women's motivations to work, their experience of the workplace and the meanings they attach to employment, as well as the ways in which they manage to balance multiple role commitments are just beginning to be explored.

Our three-year study of urban women in blue-collar and service occupations is an effort to provide valuable data and fresh perspectives on this topic.

Research Findings on Women in Blue-Collar and Service Occupations

The data under discussion are preliminary findings from intensive case studies of 120 women in working-class jobs (approximately 75% of which are nontraditional) in three major cities in California. These women are being followed over a three-year period with consideration given to their personal and work histories; their current work or training situation; their continuing employment experiences; and the manner in which they combine work roles with marriage, family and community roles. In addition, we are collecting a variety of information on political and social attitudes, including attitudes towards sex roles and the women's movement.

Our sample is drawn primarily from work and training settings. The first two years of data collection have involved two separate, lengthy, tape-recorded, semistructured interviews. In this way we have been able to capture a longitudinal picture of the experience of the women as described and interpreted through their own language and framework of understanding.

Sixty-nine percent of the sample are Caucasian, 13% Black, 12% Latina and 6% Other. The majority (73%) are 30 years and under. Fourteen percent never completed high school, 20% finished their schooling with high school, 44% have some college, and 15% have bachelors' degrees. Twenty-five percent of the

respondents are currently married (another 20% are separated or divorced) and 30% currently have children at home. The over-representation of younger women in our sample in part accounts for the under-representation of married women and women with children. The pioneering nature of movement into nontraditional fields may also attract single women with fewer responsibilities who can afford to take risks.

In the first year we interviewed approximately 30 women in traditional fields, close to half of whom were cosmetologists, and 90 women moving into nontraditional fields including occupations such as pipefitting, auto mechanics, small appliance repair, aircraft, instrument mechanics, cabinet making, welding and over two dozen other skilled trades and crafts jobs. We reinterviewed more than half of our first year group in the second year. Many of the women entering nontraditional fields have extensive work experience in primarily traditional fields such as electronics assembly, clerical work and housekeeping. The general comments about work reflect the total work experiences of the full sample. Data on work and family roles are based on comments from about half of our total sample, of whom about half again are working in the nontraditional fields.

The Significance of Paid Employment

Based on a small number of interviews with blue-collar working wives in the late 1950s Komarovsky observed that the women clearly worked for money but that the "sheer pride of earning" was itself "another reward." (Komarovsky, 1967, p. 68) She also noted that apart from money there are "other rewards of working; the enjoyment of social life on the job, the pleasures of workmanship, the bracing effect of having to get dressed up in the morning, some relief from constant association with young children and having something interesting to tell my husband." Komarovsky concluded that a "job need not be a highly skilled one to yield the worker some satisfaction from its execution." (Komarovsky, 1967, pp. 70) Our findings suggest these sentiments as well as a number of other values are crucial to an understanding of the general benefits of paid employment in women's lives. Women entering nontraditional fields additionally experience more intense and often special kinds of challenges and rewards from employment which need to be noted.

In the most general terms we have been able to identify the following cluster of motives or rewards that can describe the ways in which paid employment is significant to the women we have interviewed.

1. Economic benefits defined in terms of:
   —need for money; for basic support; for supplemental income;
   —self sufficiency or independence from husband or others;
   —enhanced sense of self worth;
   —opportunity for increased income as a function of promotions;
   —increasing earnings;
   —desire for fair compensation for contributions made, or work done.
2. Desire to get out and do something; escape boredom.
3. Desire for outside communication and friendship.
4. Desire for challenge and personal satisfaction defined in terms of:
   —learning new things;
   —meeting clear expectations; i.e., output;
   —mental challenge;
   —physical challenge
   —proving to others one is capable of unusual accomplishments;
   —enjoying change;
   —desire for independence/autonomy in work.
5. Need for achievement and recognition.

These women work for complicated reasons and derive multiple rewards from their employment. Employment does not appear to be a peripheral activity in their lives, but a central activity tied to their sense of self, independent of its clear economic benefits or its relationship to family life.

A few quotes from the respondents are illustrative of this. One woman stated the economic independence point this way:

> I've never been good for asking my husband for anything. I don't want to have to ask anybody for anything. And I don't have to say "Well, honey, can I have this or can I spend that." It gives me more money, even though what I'm making now isn't that much more. I feel a lot more independent.

Over 90% of the women interviewed indicated that money was the most important positive thing about working, with approximately half going on to frame their statements in terms of the feelings of independence and self worth that come with earning your own money.

A prevailing sentiment among another significant percentage of the women is that employment is desirable because it gets them out of the house and doing something. One woman talked at length about how she "let's herself go" unless she has some kind of job.

> Well, obviously the first plus is having money of your own, which makes a hell of a difference and just being occupied. I said before I was lazy and I am in a sense that if I sit home and I have nothing but housework, it just seems like my day gets longer and longer and I do less and less and less and I escape more. I watch televison, or read. I also drink more.

Another woman stated it this way:

> I'm a very independent person so it has — that's my income you know, and I lose by dependence on other people and I don't like, you know, being

around the house, you know, I'd rather be out doing something constructive, something that I can account for all my time and you know, I just enjoy it. I really enjoy it . . .

The third most frequently mentioned benefit is the communication and friendships that develop in the work setting.

I do like it because of the people and I get along with most everybody and have a good time, you know, it's pretty lax type of atmosphere and I don't go out very often or do anything socially too often, so here is where I get contact with people — adults that I can talk to, other than my kid. No, that would be the first thing, the contact with other people.

Many of the women go on to mention the importance of the challenges and personal satisfactions that come with their accomplishments in the work place. Such statements were especially frequent among the women in nontraditional occupations. A woman in appliance repair stated:

Right now I really want to get into something that was interesting to me. Waitressing is not in a way bad, but it is dull, you know, it's the same old stuff, plus it was very physically wearing and this is why I decided I wanted training in appliance repair. I had been thinking about some kind of trade I could get in, and this seemed like it was the most interesting. I enjoyed the training — there's enough to fixing machines so that it's a something to work at, you know, it's just not something you automatically do, you think it over and figure it out and this is the kind of work I want to get into because I think I'll enjoy it more than just more routine, routine — put it into a slot and turn it over and stamp it — that sort of a thing.

It's not just the challenge of the job itself. For many of the women a nontraditional job changes what they enjoy off the job as well. A woman working at an air rework facility has discovered a whole new world of interests.

The good things about working at this job is that I'm really learning a lot, like I said, every week I change what I'm doing and if I don't learn it well, they keep me there an additional week. They make sure that we know what we're doing and I really enjoy that because I feel like I'm accomplishing something, whereas before where I was working it was routine and you could not see anything from it, you know, you were helping somebody else, but you weren't helping yourself. With the training program, you really feel like you're learning something so you're helping yourself, you feel good about it.

With the job itself, the parts that we're doing, they go in the airplane and I've really been getting into airplanes and old movies and go to library and look at the books there. I've really taken notice of this type of thing alot more so that's good, too, because I never really had a special interest that I really got into like I am with that.

The desire to do physical work, to use your hands, and use your body is a work value only recently acknowledged in women. Many women have long been interested in vigorous physical activity and see this as a positive characteristic of many traditionally male jobs. Over a dozen women made comments similar to this one:

I found what I really liked when I was working in the shop was that my body felt better, I was getting exercise and I need exercise really bad because I'm so out of shape and that was really important to me that my job wasn't a sit-down job, I liked that. It got hard at times, you know, where your body was pooped out, but then it feels good because you felt like you had exercise so you had more energy in the long run. And doing something with your hands was kind of cool, because you could see what you were doing. Actually see the results — when you fixed a car it ran — the immediate satisfaction, and that's something I never have had in a job. In a factory you don't see where it's going or anything, so that's cool, plus you know that you did it. It's like solving a puzzle — when you get the answer, yea!

Another woman stated directly that she likes "hard" work.

Well, just that it's different. You don't find too many women that do shipfitting. And I thought — I'm always a hard worker, I don't like to brag, but I like to work hard. If I make up my mind, I know I could do it. And I wanted to do this because I figure it's different from the piddle-peddle with the women's jobs. Those little tiny things in electronics and it's just kind of boring all the time but this is hard. It's hard work.

Finally, distinct from a desire for challenge and personal satisfaction, many of the women express high needs for achievement and recognition which they feel might be satisfied through good employment. One respondent stated it this way:

I wanted my career to be real important to me and to mean something to me emotionally — satisfy a need in me — not just factory work. Making money — I didn't want to just make money. I wanted a career that was important to me, you know what I mean.

Another expressed it this way:

A high paying job. I would like a job with a position. I mean if I'm going to be in this type of work I'd like to be a supervisor or something. Something that — and I don't have any idea what their pay scale is, or maybe have the opportunity to become an electronics technician. Something so that I know more than they do, I know why it's being done and I know all about it.

A black female apprentice told us.

I've always wanted to get ahead. All my life I've

wanted to do something — like whatever I start, even today, I want to finish it, whether I'm right or wrong. I started the apprentice program and that's another four years I took contract and I don't really like contracts, but I started it and I want to finish it.

What is important about these statements is that, taken together, they highlight the diversity of sentiments and motives women in blue-collar and service occupations bring to their work or, more accurately, want from their work. It is interesting to note that, with a few exceptions, none of the women indicated they would stop working even if they did not need the money. It is clear that, at least at this particular time in the history of women, the benefits of paid employment outweigh the benefits of homemaking, particularly in light of the decreasing demands on the homemaking role and the decreasing importance of the social and familial ties which have traditionally provided some rewards for domestic roles. Working-class women are feeling this acutely as our research and the research of Ferree (1976) and Rubin (1977) reveal.

Integrating Employment and Work Roles

A realization of the significance of paid employment in the lives of the women we are studying is essential to an understanding of how they integrate work roles and family roles. If we believe, as the conventional literature suggests, that paid employment for most women is simply an extension of family roles, our understanding of its meaning in their lives and the way they combine it with other commitments will take one form. If, on the other hand, we see paid employment as central to identity and ultimately personal satisfaction, our understanding of its meaning in the lives of women and the manner in which they integrate it with other roles may take quite a different form.

The women in this sample who are married and/or raising children appear to be living with contradictory attitudes and practices when it comes to combining employment and family roles. Our data indicate that working women, cosmetologists and welders alike, express extremely egalitarian attitudes towards male-female roles in general, and towards conjugal roles in particular. In response to a short fixed-alternative questionnaire at the end of the interview, the respondents replied with the following answers:

	Agree	*Disagree*
Most girls become housewives and rarely work outside the home	16.7%	74.1%
Women should stick to "women's jobs" such as teaching, nursing, secretarial work and not compete with men	1.9%	93.5%
Women should avoid politics and community activities and put more time into doing a better job with their own families	4.6%	86.1%
It is difficult for a woman to have a career and still keep her femininity	6.5%	86.1%
Most jobs can be done as well by women as men	93.5%	4.6%

In response to specific questions dealing with roles in the family, we got the following distributions:

There is nothing more fulfilling to a woman than the raising of her children	20.4%	69.4%
A woman's greatest natural ability lies in being a mother	20.4%	74.1%
Raising children is more a mother's job than a father's	6.5%	87.0%
Having a challenging job or career is as important for women as being a wife and mother	81.5%	8.3%
A man ought to feel free to relax when he gets home from work	61.1%	24.1%
Except in special cases, the wife should do the cooking and housecleaning and the husband should provide the family with money	9.3%	86.1%
If the husband is working to support the family, his wife has no right to expect him to work while he's home	3.7%	92.6%
A man who helps around the kitchen is doing more than should be expected	3.7%	93.5%
A husband has more respect for his wife if she has a career	33.3%	38.0%

The ambivalence about husbands expressed in the last item becomes quite clear as we look carefully at the interview data. It is clear that general attitudes are not so easily transformed into practice. Many of the women describe themselves as taking responsibility for a wide range of household activities in addition to their full-time employment and though many believe a woman's job may be as important to the family and to her own sense of fulfillment as a man's, they nonetheless often have to struggle to combine their work roles with their love and marital relationships. So, for example, when asked who takes responsibility for major household tasks, there are clear differences in the types of activities husbands help with and those they do not. Husbands — in small numbers compared to wives —

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are reported as taking responsibility for such things as meal preparation, shopping and some housecleaning. However, with the diversity of other homemaking tasks which need to be done, there appears to be little help. This is particularly true with such tasks as washing and ironing and the more integrative activities such as entertaining, gift giving and taking care of family crises. In fact, when asked to describe a typical weekday, some women give rather grueling descriptions, particularly the married women in nontraditional jobs. An electronics mechanic-apprentice described her typical day in the following manner:

> I get up usually at a quarter to 5 or 5 in the morning, take a shower and wash my hair. My brother works at North Island; he was riding with me for a while, but he's not riding anymore. So I don't have to pick him up. And I usually get to work about 45 minutes early and they have a cafeteria right in the building and I usually eat breakfast there so I don't have dirty breakfast dishes to do when I get home. I'll read the paper. Then just regular working, depending on where I'm working, like I said I move every three or four months to a different shop, to different duties. But now I'm out climbing on airplanes and I usually get home about 4:30 or 4:45 and I pick Peter up and go home and let the animals in or out or wherever and cook dinner, clean up and he sits glued to the T.V. and I yell, "Dinner" and he says, "Oh, no."
>
> I: You yell what?
>
> R: I yell, "Dinner," and he doesn't want to stop watching T.V.
>
> I: How do you feel your working combines with your family responsibilities and the other responsibilities you have? Are you able to make it mesh together or is there a lot of conflict or what?
>
> R: Yeah, it's tough — it gets really hard to come home, you know; you leave the house at six and get home at five — that's 11 hours. And then to have to try to figure out something to eat and then have to do the dishes — it just gets to be a drag. I think that's mainly why I get tired of getting up for work, because of what I know I have to come home to after. Like just -- simple things — like having to remember to put the trash out for Wednesday and that type of thing. It just makes me so mad — I'm on my way out to work on Wednesday mornings and I think, "Goddam, I forgot to put the trash out last night" and then I have to go back and take it out. Just little things like that. It's tough, it's hard to do.

These comments are not very different from those expressed by a woman in a more traditional field, electronics assembly.

> R: I get up in the morning and I usually start screaming because I've overslept, and I jump in the shower — then I'm out there slamming things around, trying to make some lunches and cussing at the kids — not swearing, but hollering at them. Try to get them in gear, throw their breakfast together, try to get in my car and leave by 6:30 to come down to school, drop them off at the babysitter's, come down here. I'm in school for about six hours, then I get in my car and go home, pick up the kids look at the house which is a total wreck, and usually fall asleep in the chair for a couple of hours, or start cleaning it up — one or the other, it depends on how tired I am. And I never really sleep because I have a six year old and he has to be watched. The ten year old, he's pretty independent. Fix supper, which seems to never get fixed until about 8:00, never get my dishes done, fall asleep on the couch — maybe I'll run through some

wash or something like that, and my husband goes to bed and I usually wake up at 5:00 in the morning on the couch and then I go into bed, and get up at 5:30 or 6:00. I mean it's terrible really, but . . .

In addition to describing typical days in which they combine major amounts of time and energy both at home and at work the women also report varying degrees of support from their husbands for the kind of work they are doing. The following comment by an auto-mechanic trainee captures the spirit of many of the respondents who feel their husbands *are* supportive.

I: How does your husband feel about your work?
R: Oh, he loves it, especially when he looks at the money I've saved. Sometimes it gets to him because someone will start bugging him. "Oh, your wife's an auto mechanic." Then the neighbors — the girls — frown on it. The guys don't, but the girls think my place is in the home. I can see their point of view. Every once in a while everybody will get on his case and then he'll snap at me, but that usually doesn't last more than one day. Basically, he enjoys it. He wants me happy. He kind of laughs and makes a remark to the guys, "I don't care what she does as long as she brings home a paycheck."

The manner in which more negative feelings are communicated is well expressed in the following statement from a fork-lift operator.

I: How does your husband feel about your work?
R: I think he's jealous, just like all the other men I work with. They can't take it when a woman — they'll be nice to you until you get the same paycheck that they get and you do the same work they're doing, then they don't like it. They treat you different, they're very mean. Not my boyfriend — my boyfriend doesn't like me to talk about it — he says, "You leave work at work." He says, "You're the one who wanted to work like that, so it's your fault." 'Cause I used to complain sometimes and say, "Guy, they don't have to be so mean to me."

Conclusion

It is clear that even though the respondents express high levels of work interest and commitment, and regard employment as a major source of personal satisfaction, large numbers of them continue to perform conventional roles at home and receive only mixed support from their husbands or lovers.

What is of critical interest at this phase in the analysis is the contrast between the apparent satisfactions and rewards the women as individuals are deriving from their employment and the seemingly conventional reservations and expectations they report significant others as having. It is clear that one of the critical dilemmas for the modern woman, including the woman in the blue-collar world, is how to preserve her identity and opportunities for nonalienating labor in spite of her family commitments, rather than how to endure alienating labor to earn the necessary money for a family with whom she prefers to spend all her time. It is important to recognize the extent to which women in this mechanized century have become alienated from their work at home and socially isolated because of increasingly suburban lifestyles. In this regard working-class women are clearly similar to more affluent, educated professional women workers. Under such conditions, any outside work becomes attractive. In addition, given current inflation and other economic pressure, paid employment for blue-collar women is essential to family well-being.

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